

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-07

SAJ-01 OMB-01 SCCT-01 /086 W
----- 051870

O R 041540Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3419

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 6989

GENEVA FOR MECP DEL

NAIROBI FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, UR, XF

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON SYTENKO

REF: STATE 104043 (NOTAL)

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1. SUMMARY. DURING MY MAY 4 CALL ON AMBASSADOR SYTENKO, CHIEF OF THE MFA'S NEAR EASTERN DEPARTMENT, I RAISED THE POINTS CONTAINED IN PARA 2 OF REFTTEL, AND POINTED OUT THAT THE SECRETARY WAS STILL ON HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO AFRICA. SYTENKO DID NOT OFFER MUCH ILLUMINATION CONCERNING THE SOVIET OFFICIAL MIDDLE EAST STATEMENT, BUT HE REINFORCED THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE MAY BE SOME FLEXIBILITY IN THE SOVIET POSITION RE NEGOTIATING MODALITIES. HE STRESSED THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD ACCEPT ANY ARRANGEMENT FOR PLO PARTICIPATION IN THE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH WAS ACCEPTABLE TO THE ARAB PARTIES, AND HE EMPHASIZED THAT ISRAEL AND THE U.S. MUST ALSO BE FLEXIBLE IN ORDER TO GET SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS STARTED. SYTENKO DOWNPLAYED THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING ANY SEMI-OFFICIAL SOVIET-ISRAELI RELATIONS, AND HE CLAIMED NOT TO HAVE ANY OFFICIAL INFORMATION ON CURRENT SYRIAN INTENTIONS REGARDING TH UNDOF MANDATE RENEWAL. I ALSO RAISED WITH SYTENKO THE REPORTS OF NOVOSTI ARTICLES WHICH ATTACKED AMBASSADOR MELOY, AND INFORMED HIM THAT WE WERE MAKING INQUIRIES AT NOVOSTI TO DETERMINE THE BACKGROUND OF THESE REPORTS. END SUMMARY.

2. SOVIET STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST. I EMPHASIZED TO SYTENKO THAT WE ARE STUDYING THE SUBSTANTIVE PORTIONS OF THE STATEMENT BUT NOTED THAT THE SECRETARY HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN HIS TRIP TO AFRICA. I ADDED THAT PUBLICATION OF THE STATEMENT PRIOR TO ITS PRESENTATION TO US RAISED THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE SOVIET UNION INTENDED IT AS THE BASIS FOR SERIOUS DISCUSSION. SYTENKO REPLIED THAT THE DECLARATION REFLECTED A GENUINE EFFORT TO GET NEGOTIATIONS STARTED, AND HE SAID THE CONTENT OF THE SOVIET PROPOSAL SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A SURPORISE TO US IN THAT PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS ALONG THE LINES OF THE STATEMENT HAVE BEEN HELD. IN THIS REGARD, HE SPECIFICALLY CITED PAST MEETINGS BETWEEN GROMYKO AND THE SECRETARY.

3. I STRESSED THAT THE ANTI-U.S. LANGUAGE IN THE STATEMENT DID NOT SEEM CONDUCTIVE TO THE CREATION OF A PROPER COOPERATIVE ATMOSPHERE FOR DEALING WITH THE COMPLEX MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT. SYTENKO REPLIED THAT THE AMOUNT

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OF CRITICISM AIMED AT THE U.S. WAS "VERY SMALL," AND IN THIS CONNECTION HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED THE RETURN OF AMBASSADOR BROWN TO LEBANON, AS WELL AS THE MOVEMENT OF SIXTH FLEET SHIPS TOWARD THE LEBANESE COAST. I NOTED THAT THESE SHIPS WERE ON THEIR PRESENT STATIONS TO EVACUATE AMERICANS SHOULD THE NEED ARISE, AND I ALSO ALLUDED TO REPORTS OF SOVIET VESSELS IN THE AREA. SYTENKO DENIED THAT THIS WAS THE CASE. IN THE ELBANESE

CONTEXT, I ALSO RAISED THE ISSUE OF THE REPORTED NOVOSTI ARTICLES WHICH ATTACKED AMBASSADOR MELOY AND SERIOUSLY DISTORTED HIS BACKGROUND. I INFORMED SYTENKO THAT WE WERE MAKING INQUIRIES AT NOVOSTI TO DETERMINE THE BASIS OF THESE REPORTS; SYTENKO SEEMED UNINFORMED, AND ADDED THAT "WHAT WE WANTED TO SAY ON LEBANON WAS IN THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST."

4. IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROPOSAL FOR A "TWO-PHASE" GENEVA MEPC, SYTENKO SAID THAT THE "SHORT" FIRST STAGE --STILL UNDER U.S. - USSR CO-CHAIRMANSHIP--WOULD DEAL WITH QUESTIONS SUCH AS "COMPOSITION OF DELEGATIONS, WORKING GROUPS, AGENDA, AND GENERAL ORGANIZATION". AS TO VENUE, SYTENKO SAID GENEVA "WOULD BE BETTER," BUT THAT THIS FIRST SESSION " COULD BE HELD ELSEWHERE." THE SECOND STAGE WOULD BE HELD IN GENEVA ITSELF, SYTENKO ADDED, AND WOULD WORK ON SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS SUCH AS A "PALESTINIAN STATE, BORDERS, AND AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT."

5. NOTING THAT THE SOVIET STATEMENT CALLED FOR PLO PARTICIPATION IN BOTH PHASES OF THE CONFERENCE, SYTENKO STATED-- AND REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE CONVERSATION --THAT THE FORM OF PLO PARTICIPATION IS A PROBLEM WHICH THE ARABS MUST DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES, AND THAT THE SOVIET UNION COULD ACCEPT ANY SOLUTION WHICH IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE ARAB PARTIES. SYTENKO EMPHASIZED THAT MOSCOW IS NOT AGAINST THE IDEA OF A PREPARATORY MEETING AS SUGGESTED BY THE US, BUT THAT WE ESSENTIALLY DIFFER ON THE QUESTION OF PLO PARTICIPATION; HE ADDED THAT "THERE IS NO WAY OUT WITHOUT THE PLO." IN THIS REGARD, HE STRESSED THE RECOGNITION (IN VARIOUS FORMS) THE PLO HAS RECEIVED FROM THE UN, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, EUROPEAN AND ARAB COUNTRIES. HE ALSO CLAIMED THE RECENT WEST BANK

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ELECTIONS FURTHER DEMONSTRATED THE PLO'S LEGITIMACY.

6. SYTENKO ASSERTED THAT FOREIGN REACTION SO FAR TO MOSCOW'S STATEMENT HAS BEEN "VERY GOOD," AND HE ADDED THAT JORDAN AND NORTH YEMEN HAVE ISSUED OFFICIAL STATEMENTS PRAISING THE SOVIET STANCE. AS FOR SYRIA, ITS REACTION HAS ALSO BEEN VERY GOOD, ACCORDING TO SYTENKO.

7. ISRAEL-USSR. SYTENKO SAID THAT, DESPITE WHATEVER IMPLICATIONS MAY HAVE BEEN CONTAINED IN THE SOVIET STATEMENT, ESTABLISHMENT OF ANY SEMI-OFFICIAL RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL IS NOT CURRENTLY BEING CONSIDERED BY MOSCOW. THE REASONS, REMAIN THE SAME, SYTENKO CONTINUED, CITING THE ISRAELI POSITION CONCERNING A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, AS WELL AS ANTI-SOVIET "ZIONIST ACTIONS IN NEW YORK"

WHICH HE ATTRIBUTED TO THE ISRAELIS. HE REITERATED, HOWEVER, THAT THE USSR HAS "NO PREJUDICES" AGAINST ISRAEL, AND THAT MOSCOW HAS EXPRESSED ITS SUPPORT FOR THE INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE OF AN ISRAELI STATE. WHAT MOSCOW OPPOSES, SYTENKO CONTINUED, IS THE CURRENT POLICY OF ISRAEL.

8. SYRIA. SYTENKO SAID HE HAD NO OFFICIAL INFORMATION TO OFFER CONCERNING SYRIAN THINKING ON THE QUESTION OF THE RENEWAL OF THE UNDOF MANDATE. HE CLAIMED THE SYRIANS BELIEVE "THERE IS STILL TIME," AND THAT THEY ARE CONSIDERING THEIR OPTIONS.

9. LEBANON. SYTENKO EXPRESSED CONCERN REGARDING THE SITUATION IN LEBANON, AND HE CALLED IT "PART OF THE WHOLE PROBLEM." HE ADDED THAT THERE WERE REPORTS THAT THE CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS WERE FORMING SEPARATE ADMINISTRATIONS, THUS REINFORCING THE TREND TOWARD PARTITION. IN RESPONSE TO HIS QUESTION, I REITERATED THE U.S. POSITION THAT WE HOPED THE ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT WOULD RESULT IN REDUCED FIGHTING, WOULD LEAD TO A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS, AND WOULD INSURE LEBANON'S INDEPENDENCE. I MENTIONED THAT THE TWO PRIME CANDIDATES APPEARED TO BE EDDE AND SARKIS: SYTENKO RESPONDED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO MEN'S POLITICAL POSITIONS, BUT ADDED THAT SUCH

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DIFFERENCES AS MIGHT EXIST WOULD NOT JUSTIFY CONTINUED FIGHTING.

10. JORDAN. THERE IS STILL NO OFFICIAL DATE FOR KING HUSSEIN'S VISIT, SYTENKO SAID, ALTHOUGH THE JORDANIANS HAVE EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO HOLD THE VISIT "SOMETIME IN MID-JUNE." I INQUIRED ABOUT PRESS REPORTS RE POSSIBLE SOVIET SUPPLY OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONRY TO THE JORDANIANS, BUT SYTENKO SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE SOVIET RESPONSE WOULD BE IF THE JORDANIANS MADE SUCH A REQUEST.

11. COMMENT. SYTENKO DID NOT REVEAL MUCH MORE HARD INFORMATION THAN HE NORMALLY DOES, AND HE DID NOT SHED MUCH LIGHT ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SOVIET STATEMENT. THE PREDOMINANT THEME RUNNING THROUGH HIS GENERAL REMARKS WAS THAT A PREPARATORY OR FIRST PHASE CONFERENCE SHOULD BE HELD IN ORDER TO DEFUSE A DANGEROUS SITUATION. HE SUGGESTED NO SPECIFIC DATE FOR SUCH A MEETING, HOWEVER, AND EXPRESSED GREAT CONFIDENCE IN THE UTILITY OF CONVENING SOME SORT OF PROCEDURAL CONFERENCE SIMPLY TO GET NEGOTIATIONS UNDERWAY. NOT SURPRISINGLY, HE PLACED THE BLAME FOR LACK OF ANY DIPLOMATIC MOVEMENT ON ISRAELI AND U.S. INTRAN-

SIGENCE, AND CLAIMED THAT IF THE U.S. AND USSR WERE
SERIOUS MINDED, ALL PROBLEMS COULD BE SURMOUNTED. HIS
REMARKS ON THE ELEMENTS OF A FIRST PHASE CONFERENCE,
AS WELL AS HIS REITERATION THAT THE SOLUTION TO THE
PROBLEM OF PLO PARTICIPATION IS AN ARAB AFFAIR, COULD
FURTHER INDICATE SOME GIVE IN THE SOVIET POSITION RE
GENEVA. IT WOULD ALSO CONCEIVABLY INDICATE THAT ONE
OR ANOTHER OF THE ARAB PARTIES HAS SIGNED ON TO THIS PARTICULAR
SOVIET APPROACH.

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